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DE RUEHBU #1203/01 150144Z
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4687
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 5550
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 5353
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAY MONTEVIDEO 5587
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 5155
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 001203

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WHA FOR PDAS CHARLES SHAPIRO
NSC FOR DAN FISK

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: EMBASSY-GOA BILATERAL SECURITY WORKING GROUP

REF: (04) BUENOS AIRES 2419

Summary

¶1. The DCM led the Embassy's Law Enforcement and Homeland Security Working Group's first meeting with a GoA interagency security group headed by Internal Security Secretary Luis Tibiletti on May 23. Post's Working Group included representatives from RSO, LegAtt, MilGroup, DEA, DAO, POL/INL, and Econ who outlined their security-related programs and received briefings on GoA security forces' issues. GoA participants included: Under Secretary for Security Ricardo Colombo; Security Council Executive Secretary Hector Masquelet; Federal Police Chief Nestor

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Valleca; National Border Guard (Gendarmeria) Director General Hector Schenone; and Coast Guard (Prefectura) Commandant Prefecto General Carlos Fernandez. The meeting was the first of what post envisions as semiannual bilateral discussions on security cooperation. End Summary.

Emphasis on Multi-Agency Approach

¶2. The DCM led post's Law Enforcement and Homeland Security Working Group in its first meeting with a GoA interagency law enforcement and security working group headed by Secretary of Internal Security Luis Tibiletti. Representatives from RSO, LegAtt, MilGroup, DEA, DAO, POL/INL, and Econ outlined their security-related programs and responsibilities and received briefings on the issues facing the GoA's security forces. GoA participants included: Under Secretary for Security Ricardo Colombo; Security Council Executive Secretary Hector Masquelet; Federal Police Chief Nestor Valleca; National Border Guard (Gendarmeria) Director General Hector Schenone; and Coast Guard (Prefectura) Commandant Prefecto General Carlos Fernandez.

¶3. The DCM emphasized the importance of the multi-agency approach to law enforcement and expressed his appreciation for the GoA's responsiveness to U.S. counter-terrorism, international security, and law enforcement training programs. He also highlighted the success of bilateral efforts in counter-narcotics. He noted that the measurable benefits of cooperation, like the Salta Province Task Force, meant that drug enforcement funding allocated to Argentina "is money well spent." The DCM also stressed the need to

increase counter-narcotics cooperation especially in light of recent political changes in Bolivia. Tibiletti echoed the DCM's comments and spoke at length about the Interior Ministry's objective to coordinate security policies and practices across organizations at the national and provincial levels. He recounted how the Internal Security Secretariat had worked to establish a cohesive working group for 16 years. Structural changes that transferred the secretariat from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice and back interrupted efforts to solidify these coordination mechanisms, according to Tibiletti (see reftel).

GoA Interest in More Interaction

¶4. The GoA participants praised the U.S. training and exchange opportunities for individual law enforcement and security personnel. Valleca said that he wants to increase interaction with U.S. law enforcement officials because the results he sees are "better officers." Schenone and Fernandez lauded the regional "Garras del Valor" counter-narcotics training program in Bolivia sponsored by INL, by name, as a skills multiplier which they would like to make available to more of their officers. Tibiletti concluded the discussion with a request for a planning meeting in advance of the next semiannual bilateral meeting to establish a concrete agenda. He indicated he would like to see the planning meeting focus on identifying training, exchanges, technology, and resources that could be used to advance common security goals. The next semiannual bilateral meeting would then develop plans to make the programs operational.

Comment

¶5. The success of this bilateral multi-agency meeting was not limited to the mere fact of the meeting. Post received confirmation that U.S. training and exchanges were not only seen as beneficial but have had a positive impact on the GoA's security forces. The meeting also brought to light differences of opinion among the GoA participants which may generate further discussion to the benefit of U.S. interests. For instance, the DEA briefing emphasized that bilateral cooperation on counter-narcotics was excellent and might be even better if leads from informants were admissible. Valleca, Schenone, and Fernandez discussed the issue among themselves at length, and each offered an alternative explanation on the cause of the prohibition affecting informants. It was apparent from this exchange of views that the meeting served to facilitate communication within the GoA as much as between the GoA and post. Post looks forward to coordinating opportunities to enhance security cooperation with Tibiletti's office during the next six months. End Comment.

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